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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

30 November 1959

DAILY BRIEF

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II, ASIA-AFRICA

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Laos: A government crisis may be in the offing as a result of the continuing disagreement between conservative and reformist elements over whether to extend the life of the National Assembly, scheduled to expire on 25 December, and when to hold new elections. Premier Phoui, who favors extending the legislature for one year and holding elections in December 1960, is maneuvering to win support for his proposals. However, the crown, the reformists, and influential elements of the army remain adamant in their insistence that the assembly be permitted to expire and that earlier elections be held.)

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OK

Cyprus: The newly-organized Cypriot Democratic Union has nominated John Clerides, an experienced and somewhat opportunistic politician, to oppose Archbishop Makarios in the presidential elections of 13 December. Clerides has assailed the "suffocating limitations" of the Cyprus agreements of last February, but has not advocated their overthrow. The well-organized, but proscribed, Communist party on Cyprus has announced its support for Clerides following Makarios' rejection of Communist proposals for a united front. While Makarios is expected to win the elections by a comfortable margin, the contest is likely to be a bitter one with a further splitting of the Greek Cypriot non-Communists. The Communists in turn will have a new device for continuing their attacks on the Cyprus settlement, particularly the provisions for British retention of military bases. (Page 4)

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Belgian Congo: The deadlock in negotiations between Belgian Minister for the Congo de Schrijver and Congolese nationalist leaders concerning the timing of roundtable talks on the Congo's political future will aggravate already serious tension in the Congo. Leaders of the two prominent nationalist parties have demanded these talks with Belgian authorities before the local elections scheduled for mid-December. Should Brussels attempt to hold these elections next month despite a threatened nationalist boycott, further violence may occur. Apparently in anticipation of trouble, many Belgian civil servants in the colony in late November had taken steps to have their families or personal effects transferred home. (Page 5)

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

Laotian Government Crisis May Be Imminent

(No progress has been made in resolving the disagreement between conservative and reformist elements in the Laotian Government over whether to extend the life of the National Assembly, due to expire on 25 December, and when to hold new elections. Premier Phoui, whose main base of political support is the dominant conservative element in the assembly, favors a one-year extension of the assembly's life by means of a constitutional amendment and national elections in December, 1960. On the other hand, King Savang, the reformist Committee for the Defense of National Interests (CDNI), and influential elements in the army remain adamant in their insistence that the assembly be allowed to expire and elections be held sometime next spring or summer.)

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(Room for compromise still exists, but the CDNI and its supporters in the army may be strongly tempted to exploit the present disagreement as a pretext for upsetting the existing balance of power in the government and assuming full control.)

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~~Makarios Fails~~ Opposition in Cypriot Presidential Election

The announcement on 26 November that John Clerides, 72-year-old former mayor of Nicosia, has accepted the nomination of the newly-formed Cypriot Democratic Union party to oppose Archbishop Makarios in the 13 December presidential election paves the way for a bitter and divisive electoral contest. On 27 November, AKEL, the proscribed Cypriot Communist party, announced it would support Clerides.

Clerides is not considered pro-Communist, although he accepted Communist support in winning the mayoralty election in 1946; he suffers from a reputation as an opportunist. He shares leadership of the Democratic Union with his long-time political foe and present mayor of Nicosia, Themistocles Dervis. A manifesto issued by the new party indicates that provisions of the London-Zurich agreements of last February will be the major target in Clerides' campaign. Clerides has made it clear, however, that he does not advocate abrogation of the agreements but hopes "to confine the political and economic harm they are doing." He has attacked Makarios' "dictatorial" handling of Cypriot affairs in recent months and calls for a "democratic and prudent administration."

The Democratic Union is believed to have little support on Cyprus, with its strength centering on dissident elements among the professional and business classes in Nicosia. Clerides can expect more electoral support from AKEL, which turned to Clerides following Makarios' rejection of its terms for a united front. AKEL claims 7,000 members--all Greek Cypriots--and dominates the 38,000-member Pan-Cyprian Federation of Labor. The Communists are expected to concentrate attacks on those provisions of the Cyprus agreements permitting the British to retain military bases on the island.

Since Makarios has wide popularity on Cyprus and since Clerides' support is heterogeneous and the issues upon which he bases his campaign are questionable, the archbishop ought to win by a comfortable margin. To ensure the loyalty of right-wing nationalists, Makarios is reported to have a taped statement by General Grivas which pledges the former EOKA leader's unequivocal support for the archbishop. However, in the elections for the House of Representatives which will probably be held in January, supporters of Makarios may find it much more difficult to secure victory over the combined Democratic Union - AKEL opposition. [redacted]

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Tension Increasing in Belgian Congo

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[redacted]
The deadlock in negotiations between Belgian Minister for the Congo de Schrijver and Congolese nationalist leaders concerning the timing of roundtable talks on the Congo's political future may aggravate already serious political tension in the Congo. [Apparently in anticipation of more disorders, many Belgian civil servants in the Congo had taken steps in late November to be transferred home.] Nationalist rioting near Stanleyville claimed the lives of about 24 Africans in late October.

Brussels' plans for the Congo envisage local elections in mid-December as the first step toward Congolese independence, about four years away, with any roundtable discussions to be held after the December elections. However, the two leading Congolese nationalist groups--the Abako and the Congo National Movement--demand "immediate" independence and formal negotiations prior to the holding of local elections. Both groups have stated their intention of boycotting the December elections. Should the Belgians attempt to hold the elections as scheduled, further violence may occur. [redacted]

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